4.17 VISUAL RESOURCES

All of the alternatives would impact visual resources to varying degrees. Generally, the greater the degree of surface disturbance, the greater the impact would be to scenic quality. Fire, minerals development, trail maintenance and construction (both non-motorized and motorized), special designation areas, recreation, grazing, visual resources, and woodland-forest management would introduce new visual elements into the landscape, altering the line, form, color, and texture that characterize the existing landscape. These visible, surface-disturbing impacts, measured as line, form, color, or texture contrasts with the natural environment, would impact scenic quality.

In assessing the degree of surface-disturbing impacts on scenic quality, viewer perception (measured as viewing distance), viewer sensitivity to impacts, and Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class objectives are also considered. Areas with lower scenic value (managed as VRM Class III and VRM Class IV) are allowed a wider range of impacts on visual resources than areas with higher scenic value (VRM Class I and VRM Class II).

All surface-disturbing activities, regardless of alternative or management action, would be subject to the VRM Class objectives of the area within which the activity takes place. The visual resource contrast rating system is used as a guide to analyze the potential site-specific impacts of surface disturbance as well as facility design and placement. Surface-disturbing activities and facilities would then be designed to mitigate their visual impacts and conform to the area's assigned VRM Class objective. It should be noted that the VRM acreages used in this analysis of impacts on visual resources include all lands within the VPA, not only BLM administered lands. This is because of the nature of VRM, in which foreground, middleground, and background views (that could include a mosaic of federal, state, and privately controlled lands) are considered when assessing the proposed alternative management action impacts on the landscape. See Figures 29 – 32 for depictions of the proposed VRM Classes within the VPA for each alternative.

4.17.1 Impacts Common to All Alternatives

4.17.1.1 Fire Management

Fire management decisions, including use of prescribed fire, vegetation treatment, and fire suppression, would impact visual quality under all of the alternatives. Mechanical and/or chemical treatments, prescribed burning, and seeding treatments would have direct and indirect effects on the existing visual characteristics of the landscape. Prescribed burning impacts on visual quality would tend to be adverse in the short term and beneficial in the long term. Burning and/or chemically and mechanically removing vegetation and then seeding would produce direct impacts that alter the color and the textural, formal, and linear attributes of the existing landscape. Indirect impacts to the color, line, form, and texture of the landscape would be produced by fences or barriers used to exclude livestock from the treated areas.

The impacts of fire suppression on visual resources, for all of the alternatives, would also vary depending upon the methods used for suppression. The application of fire retardant to the landscape would produce minor, short-term, adverse visual contrasts because of its bright color, but this effect would dissipate relatively quickly. Access to burned areas and areas in the vicinity of dozer lines and firebreaks would be restricted in the short term, but limiting this access would

have minor, beneficial effects in the long term by reducing further impacts. Fire suppression-related construction of firelines, firebreaks, dozer lines, and access roads for fire crews and equipment would produce both short-term and long-term beneficial and adverse impacts on visual resources. Beneficial impacts on visual resources would be produced by the preservation of vegetation not intended for fire treatment. Adverse impacts would be the potentially strong linear, color, texture, and form contrasts produced by the construction of highly disturbed strips of land denuded of vegetation for firebreaks, firelines, and temporary access roads. If not effectively rehabilitated, these fire-suppression features could remain as long-term visual impacts.

Long-term beneficial impacts to visual resources from fire management would be produced by: 1) the reduction in the potential for catastrophic, stand-destroying wildland fires; 2) the recreation of historic fire regimes; 3) increased biodiversity, with a reduction in diseased, stressed, and infested trees; and 4) the creation of a visual mosaic of vegetation that would tend to improve scenic quality.

4.17.1.2 Lands and Realty

Land and realty management decisions would have impacts on visual quality under all of the alternatives. Withdrawal of lands open to mineral leasing within the Green River Scenic Corridor is a management action applicable to all of the alternatives. The impacts of this action on visual resources would be protection-related in the short term and long term because these lands would be preserved from the potentially adverse visual effects caused by mineral exploration and development (see below for mineral and hydrocarbon effects on visual resources).

4.17.1.3 Minerals

Minerals and hydrocarbon leasing would have direct and indirect adverse impacts on visual quality under all of the alternatives, in the short term and long term. The effects on visual quality would include strong visual contrasts from (and not limited to) the construction of well pads, access roads, drilling rigs, pipelines, and processing and support facilities. Indirect impacts to visual quality, both short-term and long-term, would be the result of soil erosion from disturbed areas, fugitive dust from disturbed areas, and/or regional haze from compressor and generator emissions that could obscure or degrade scenic vistas.

4.17.1.4 Recreation

Recreational OHV use would tend to cause direct and indirect adverse impacts to visual quality, in the short-term and long-term, under all of the alternatives. Direct visual quality degradation would be caused by visual contrast-creating disturbances in natural areas from trail expansion and trail widening, particularly on highly visible steep slopes and ridgelines. Indirect impacts would be caused by visibility-reducing fugitive dust from trails, potential adverse impacts to cultural resources that possess visual or scenic attributes such as petroglyphs, pictographs, and prehistoric structures, and soil erosion contrasts.

4.17.1.5 Visual

Visual resource management (VRM) would have impacts on visual quality under all of the alternatives. Visual Resource Management Classes I and II would provide the highest level of visual resource protection, with direct, short-term and long-term, protection and preservation-

related impacts on visual quality; VRM III and VRM IV would be less protective, allowing more surface-disturbing impacts than VRM I and II.

4.17.1.6 Special Designations

Special designation areas are proposed under all of the alternatives. These areas include SRMAs, ACECs, and portions of rivers identified as being suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic River System. Generally, SRMAs, ACECs, and Wild and Scenic Rivers are established to protect wildlife, vegetation, cultural resources, scenic quality, or recreational opportunities, each of which has direct, preservation-related impacts on the scenic quality component of an area. Each of the designations proposed would have direct, short-term and long-term preservation-related impacts on scenic quality within the designated areas by requiring all surface-disturbing activities to conform to the goals and objectives of the particular special designation area. The direct impacts on scenic quality would be the same for all the alternatives (see Section 4.17.2.9).

Forage, paleontology, rangeland improvements, special status species, wild horses, and wildlife and fisheries management decisions would have negligible affects on visual resources. These resources are not analyzed further.

4.17.2 Alternative Impacts

4.17.2.1 Impacts of Cultural Decisions on Visual Resources

4.17.2.1.1 Alternative A

Under this alternative, high-density archaeological and historical sites (and thus visual resources) would be protected from OHV-use disturbance by limiting this activity to designated routes in the Uinta Foothills, Devils Hole, Upper Willow Creek, and Four Mile Wash areas. These management actions would have direct, short-term and long-term protection and preservation-related impacts on visual quality. Compared to Alternative D, this alternative would be more protective of visual resources.

4.17.2.1.2 Alternative B

Under this alternative, the protection and preservation-related impacts on cultural (and thus visual) resources would be similar to those for Alternative A. Compared to Alternative D, this alternative would be more protective.

4.17.2.1.3 Alternative C

Under Alternative C, high-density cultural sites and traditional sacred properties would be protected in the Uinta Foothills, Devils Hole, Upper Willow Creek, and Four Mile Wash areas as well, via the exclusion of oil and gas leasing and OHV use. These management actions would have the greatest direct, short-term and long-term protection and preservation-related impacts on visual quality. Compared to Alternative D, this alternative would be more resource protective.

4.17.2.1.4 Alternative D – No Action

Alternative D would not limit OHV use near high-density cultural sites, and high-density cultural sites would be open to oil and gas leasing. This alternative would have long-term, adverse

impacts on visual quality by permitting these regulated, surface-disturbing activities in the vicinity of high-density cultural resources.

In summary, Alternatives A and C would provide the highest level of visual resource protection, as they also provide the highest levels of cultural resource protection. Alternative B would provide some visual resource protection, but less than Alternatives A and C. Alternative D would provide the lowest level of cultural resource protection.

4.17.2.2 Impacts of Fire Management Decisions on Visual Resources

4.17.2.2.1 Alternatives A, B, and C

These alternatives would allow for prescriptive fire treatments on approximately 156,425 acres per decade. The scenic quality impacts of fire management, either beneficial or adverse, would vary, depending upon the location, size, and timing of the burned areas and the type of fire management treatment conducted (as described under Section 4.17.1). Short-term impacts of fire management decisions upon visual resources would be largely adverse, affecting the color, line, form, and texture of the treated area. However, generally, the use of prescribed fire, as part of a fire management program would have a long-term benefit on visual resources; it would decrease the frequency and size of unmanaged wildland fires and reduce smoke generation, both of which would adversely affect visual resources. (Refer to 4.17.1 Impacts Common to All Alternatives for a detailed impact analysis of all fire management decisions.) These action alternatives, when compared to Alternative D, would have greater beneficial impacts on visual resources.

4.17.2.2.2 Alternative D – No Action

Alternative D would use prescriptive fire methods (including but not limited to prescribed burning) on up to 27,950 acres in the Book Cliffs area and would manipulate 22,950 acres within the Diamond Mountain area. The potential impacts, either adverse or beneficial, would be similar to those described under Alternative A and Section 4.17.1, Impacts Common to All Alternatives, but to a lesser degree and smaller scale than the action alternatives.

In summary, assuming that fire management would have long-term, beneficial impacts on scenic quality, Alternatives A, B, and C would have equivalent impacts on this resource. Alternative D would have the least beneficial impacts on scenic quality due to the increased risk of large, potentially catastrophic, wildland fires.

4.17.2.3 Impacts of Lands and Realty Decisions on Visual Resources

4.17.2.3.1 Alternatives A, B, and C

Described in Section 4.17.1, Impacts Common to All Alternatives, Alternatives A, B, and C propose that locatable mineral withdrawals be pursued in order to preclude mineral entry into the Green River Scenic Corridor in Browns Park, the White River, Lears Canyon, the Book Cliffs Natural Area, and the Lower Green River ACEC. The proposed withdrawals, totaling 36,267 acres, would have direct, protection-related impacts on scenic quality in these areas. When compared to Alternative D, these action alternatives would provide less protection than the No Action Alternative.

4.17.2.3.2 Alternative D – No Action

Alternative D would pursue mineral withdrawals in the Green River Scenic Corridor, relict vegetation areas, the Lower Green River, and 5,000 acres of mineral withdrawal within developed and potential recreation sites, for a total of 35,900 acres of mineral withdrawals. Mineral withdrawals under this alternative would have beneficial protection-related impacts on visual resources.

In summary, Alternative D would provide the highest level of protection to visual resources from locatable mineral withdrawals. Alternatives A, B, and C would provide a high level of protection to visual resources, but to lesser degree than Alternative D.

4.17.2.4 Impacts of Grazing Decisions on Visual Resources

4.17.2.4.1 Alternatives A and C

Under Alternatives A and C, grazing would be eliminated in the Nine Mile Acquired Area. This would have direct, protection-related impacts on visual resources by preserving scenic quality of riparian areas. Compared to Alternative D, these alternatives would provide more protection from grazing to riparian areas.

4.17.2.4.2 Alternative B

Alternative B would allow limited grazing in the Nine Mile Acquired Area. This alternative would not have adverse impacts on visual quality if the loss of riparian vegetation to grazing did not conflict with or detract from recreation/scenic values along the riparian corridor.

4.17.2.4.3 Alternative D – No Action

Under Alternative D grazing management actions are unspecified in the Nine Mile Acquired Area. Similar to Alternative B, this alternative would not have adverse impacts on visual quality if the loss of riparian vegetation to grazing did not conflict with or detract from recreation/scenic values along the riparian corridor. Based on the lack of specific management actions for this alternative in the Nine Mile area, the grazing impacts on scenic quality in the riparian corridor are unknown.

In summary, Alternatives A and C would provide total protection of this riparian area from grazing. Alternative B would provide more protection than is given under current management, but less than A and C. Alternative D would provide no protection.

4.17.2.5 Effects of Minerals/Energy Decisions on Visual Resources

As described under Section 4.17.1, Impacts Common to All Alternatives, minerals-related exploration, development, and facilities construction create surface disturbances that would adversely affect scenic quality. As mentioned in the introduction, an assumption made during analysis of visual resources is that the greater the numbers of acres available for mineral exploration, the greater the potentially adverse impacts to visual resources. The proposed acreages available for minerals leasing are tabulated below in Table 4.17.1. Alternatives A, B, C, and D would potentially allow minerals leasing within the VPA on approximately 2,831,195 acres; 2,905,472 acres; 2,610,904 acres; and 2,516,557 acres, respectively. (**Note**: among the

alternatives, there is some overlap of acres available for the various minerals uses; the total acreages are an approximation, and the sum of acres is greater than the acres within the VPA.)

In summary, the greatest acreage of potential minerals-related surface disturbance (and subsequent potential degradation of visual quality) would occur under Alternative B, followed by Alternative A and then C. Alternative D proposes the least acreage of potential mineral surface disturbance.

TABLE 4.17.1. MINERAL LEASING ACREAGES

	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Oil and Gas – Standard Stipulations, Timing and Controlled Surface Use	1,776,782	1,819,397	1,627,085	1,536,030
Combined Hydrocarbon/Special Tar Sands – Standard Stipulations, Timing and Controlled Surface Use	252,665	259,662	239,096	217,487
Mineral Materials – Open	415,395	432,953	388,699	387,700
Phosphate – Open	87,724	87,724	63,571	84,600
Oil Shale - Open	298,629	305,736	292,453	290,740
Total	**2,831,195**	**2,905,472**	**2,610,904**	**2,516,557**
Gilsonite (miles)	172	172	172	168

4.17.2.6 Effects of Recreation Decisions on Visual Resources

4.17.2.6.1 Alternative A

Alternative A would manage 24,183 acres along the White River as an SRMA. Asphalt Wash would be managed as VRM I and VRM II, OHV use would be limited to designated routes, and the White River corridor would be protected from surface-disturbing activities for up to 1/2 mile on either side of the center line of the river. This would have direct, short-term and long-term preservation-related impacts on scenic quality.

Alternative A would manage 273,486 acres within the Book Cliffs, 42,758 in Blue Mountain, 1,020 acres in Pelican Lake, 52,720 acres in Browns Park, 24,285 acres in Red Mountain-Dry Fork, and 81,168 acres in Nine Mile Canyon as SRMAs. This would have direct, beneficial, short-term and long-term impacts on scenic quality by limiting surface-disturbing activities.

Under Alternative A, the direct long-term adverse impacts of light pollution adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument would be mitigated.

4.17.2.6.2 Alternative B

Alternative B would continue to manage the White River corridor for recreational use with minimal management oversight, which would potentially create scenic quality degradation due to unrestricted OHV use, unlimited recreational group sizes, potential concentrated use of certain recreational areas, and minimal monitoring of impacts to scenic quality from recreational use.

Alternative B would also manage the Book Cliffs for unlimited and unconfined recreation, which would have direct and indirect, short-term and long-term, adverse impacts from surface-disturbing activities associated with recreation.

Alternative B would continue to manage Browns Park as an 18,474-acre SRMA, Red Mountain-Dry Fork as a 25,285-acre SRMA, Pelican Lake as a 1,020 SRMA, and Nine Mile Canyon as an 44,181-acre SRMA to protect scenic, recreational, wildlife, cultural, and vegetation resources in these areas, which would result in long-term protection-related impacts to these areas.

Under Alternative B, the direct long-term adverse impacts of light pollution adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument would be mitigated.

4.17.2.6.3 Alternative C

Alternative C would manage 47,130 acres along the White River as an SRMA. Asphalt Wash would be managed as VRM I and VRM II, OHV use would be limited to designated routes, and the White River corridor would be protected from surface-disturbing activities for up to one mile on either side of the river corridor. These actions would have direct, beneficial, short-term and long-term protection-related impacts on scenic quality.

Similar to Alternative A, Alternative C would manage 273,486 acres within the Book Cliffs, 52,720 acres in Browns Park, 24,285 acres in Red Mountain-Dry Fork, 1,020 in Pelican Lake, 69 acres in Fantasy Canyon, 42,758 acres in Blue Mountain, and 81,168 acres in Nine Mile Canyon as SRMAs. These management actions would have direct, short-term and long-term preservation-related impacts on visual quality because either: 1) the SRMAs would use integrated activity plans in their management that provide for scenic viewing; 2) scenic vistas would be protected; or 3) surface-disturbing activities would be limited to those that complement recreational values (which usually include a scenic quality component).

The impacts of Alternative C would be essentially same as for Alternative A, except that Alternative C would also manage some areas as Oil and Gas No Leasing areas. This would further reduce the potential, surface-disturbing, adverse impacts to visual quality in these areas.

Under Alternative C, the direct long-term adverse impacts of light pollution adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument would be mitigated.

4.17.2.6.4 Alternative D – No Action

Alternative D would have impacts similar to Alternative B (the designation and size of SRMAs would be the same as Alternative B), except that there would not be any light pollution mitigation adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument.

In summary, Alternative C would provide the greatest level of scenic quality protection within the SRMAs, followed by Alternative A. Alternatives B and D would provide the least scenic quality protection. Compared to Alternative D, Alternative C would provide the most visual quality protection from light pollution, followed by A and B. Alternative D would not protect the National Monument from light pollution.

4.17.2.7 Impacts of Travel/Roads/Trails Decisions on Visual Resources

4.17.2.7.1 Alternative A

Alternative A proposes to improve and/or develop up to 400 miles of mechanized (non-motorized) trails. Developing additional trails would have an impact on visual resources and could affect scenic quality; however, the visual contrast rating system would be used to analyze the potential impacts of trail building and trail improvement, and trails would be designed to conform to an area's VRM Class objective. The surface-disturbing impacts on scenic quality would be minor.

Under Alternative A, new permitted roads and trails would be obliterated and/or reclaimed after serving their useful purposes. This would have no net impact on scenic quality. Although the roads would be an adverse impact, reclamation would essentially reverse the impact by reducing scenic quality-degrading contrasts, restoring the existing character of the landscape, and reducing indirect adverse impacts caused by potential soil erosion and fugitive dust.

Alternative A would also allow the improvement and/or development of 800 miles of motorized trails. Trail modification or construction would have direct, long-term, adverse impacts on scenic quality, but visual contrast rating analysis and conformance to the area's VRM Class objectives would mitigate the impacts of this surface-disturbing activity. Indirect, long-term, adverse impacts would be produced by soil erosion, trail widening, and unmanaged extension of the trail system by OHVs.

Alternative A would not allow OHV use for off-trail, big game retrieval. This management action would have direct, long-term beneficial impacts on visual quality by reducing the creation or extension of OHV trails.

Under Alternative A, areas within the VPA designated as "open" to OHV travel would be limited to approximately 6,202 acres, a decrease of approximately 781,657 acres when compared to Alternative D. Limiting the number of open-designated acres would have long-term direct and indirect, beneficial impacts on visual quality by reducing the potential production of scenic-quality degrading fugitive dust, and soil and vegetation disturbances within the landscape.

Areas designated as "limited" to OHV travel would be increased to 1,643,475 acres (an increase of 756,200 acres from current management under Alternative D), which would have direct long-term beneficial impacts on visual resources by increasing the level of OHV management and by reducing the extent of OHV-caused visual quality degradation within the VPA.

Designating areas "closed" to OHV travel would be increased from 50,388 acres (under Alternative D) to 75,845 acres and the number of miles of routes designated routes would increase from zero miles under existing conditions (Alternative D) to 4,860 miles. This increase in designated OHV routes would have direct, long-term beneficial impacts on visual resources by reducing the OHV-related disturbances to soil, water, and vegetation.

4.17.2.7.2 Alternative B

Alternative B proposes not obliterating or reclaiming new permitted roads and trails if they serve public interests. The effects, consisting of fugitive dust, erosional impacts, and surface-disturbing contrasts from OHV use, would be directly adverse to visual quality in the long term. However, these roads and trails would conform to the VRM Class objective of the area within which they

lie, and monitoring would prevent unmanaged extension of the trails or roads; thus, the surface-disturbing impacts on scenic quality would be minor.

Alternative B proposes OHV use for big game retrieval off designated routes, which could have short-term and long-term, direct and indirect adverse impacts on visual quality as described under Section 4.17.1, Impacts Common to All Alternatives.

Areas open to OHV travel would decrease to 5,434 acres (a decrease of 782,425 acres when compared to current management as described under Alternative D – No Action).

Areas limited to OHV travel would increase to 1,659,901 acres, an increase of 772,626 acres from current management as described under Alternative D.

Areas closed to OHV travel would increase to a total of 60,187 acres (an increase difference of 10,799 acres compared to Alternative D), the least amount of all the alternatives.

The number of miles of routes designated would increase from zero miles under existing conditions (Alternative D) to 4,861 miles.

The effects of Alternative B OHV management actions on visual resources would be similar to those described under Alternative A, for areas open to OHV travel. Areas designated as closed to OHV use would be somewhat reduced, which would provide more opportunity for overland OHV travel with subsequent potential degradation of visual resources. Alternative B would have long-term beneficial impacts on visual resources similar to those described under Alternative A.

4.17.2.7.3 Alternative C

Alternative C proposes to improve and/or develop up to 400 miles of mechanized (non-motorized) trails but would not allow improvement or development of 800 miles of motorized trails. This would have direct, long-term, beneficial, protection-related impacts on visual quality by reducing the level of surface disturbances, when compared to Alternative D.

Under Alternative C, new permitted roads and trails would be obliterated and/or reclaimed after serving their useful purposes. The effects would be similar to those described for Alternative A.

Alternative C would not allow OHV use for off-trail big game retrieval. The impacts of this management action would be similar to Alternative A.

The impacts of OHV management decisions would be similar to those described under Alternative A. There would be 5,434 acres open to OHV travel (the same as Alternative B), and the impacts of open OHV areas would be similar to those described under Alternative A.

Areas designated as limited OHV travel would be increased to 1,353,529 acres, an increase of 466,254 acres, from current management under Alternative D, with impacts similar to those described under Alternative A.

Areas closed to OHV travel would be increased from 50,388 acres (under Alternative D) to 366,559 acres, which would have direct long-term beneficial protection-related impacts on soil, water, and vegetation, similar to those described under Alternative A.

The number of miles of routes designated would increase from zero miles under existing conditions to 4,707 miles.

Alternative C would be the most restrictive of OHV use, with long-term beneficial impacts as described under Alternative A.

4.17.2.7.4 Alternative D – No Action

Alternative D proposes 55 miles of trail development and proposes not obliterating or reclaiming new permitted roads and trails if they serve public interests. The effects, consisting of fugitive dust, erosional impacts, and surface-disturbing contrasts from OHV use, would be directly adverse to visual quality in the long term.

Current management practices designate a total of 787,859 acres as open to OHV travel, 887,275 acres as limited, and 50,388 acres as closed. No OHV routes would be designated under this alternative. Travel management under current conditions would maintain the current adverse impacts to visual resources. The adverse impacts of OHV-caused surface disturbances to soil, water, vegetation, and other components of visual quality would continue.

In summary, Alternatives A and C travel decisions would have the greatest beneficial impacts on visual resources, followed by Alternative D. Alternatives B would have greater OHV impacts on visual resources than the other alternatives by not requiring reclamation or obliteration of roads and trails.

4.17.2.8 Impacts of Riparian/Soils/Watershed Decisions on Visual Resources

Surface-disturbing activities on steep slopes would tend to have direct and indirect, short-term and long-term, adverse impacts on scenic quality because of their high visibility: the larger the disturbance, the more visible it becomes from foreground and middleground viewpoints, and thus, the greater the impact on visual quality. Direct impacts would result from visual contrasts between surface disturbance and the surrounding landscape; indirect impacts would result from contrasts caused by soil erosion-related surface disturbance.

Under Alternatives A, B, C, surface disturbance impacts on 21-40% slopes would be mitigated through an erosion control strategy, in accordance with VRM Classes. Under Alternative A, disturbances on slopes greater than 40% would not be allowed except when it is the least disturbing of all possible actions. Alternative B does not specify management actions on slopes greater than 40%. Alternative C would not allow any surface disturbance on slopes greater than 40%, and Alternative D would not allow mineral-related activities on these slopes.

Alternatives A, B and C would provide a high degree of scenic quality protection by mitigating erosion through erosion control strategies, and BLM-approved surveying, GIS modeling, and design. Alternative C would provide the most scenic quality protection by prohibiting steep slope disturbances greater than 40%, in addition to erosion control and GIS modeling. Alternative D would provide the least scenic quality protection by protecting slopes in excess of 40% from minerals disturbances only.

4.17.2.9 Impacts of Special Designation Area Decisions on Visual Resources

The effects of special designation areas on visual resources for each of the alternatives are tabulated below in Table 4.17.2.

Alternative C would provide the most long-term visual resource protection-related beneficial impacts, by designating the most acres as ACECs and by recommending the longest stretches of waterways for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, followed by Alternative A. Alternative B would provide some visual resource protection, but less than A or C. Alternative D would provide the lowest level of protection to visual resources, as it designates the least number

of ACEC acres and recommends protecting the fewest number of waterways and waterway stretches under the Wild and Scenic River System.

TABLE 4.17.2. IMPACTS OF SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS ON VISUAL RESOURCES [1]

Special Designation Areas	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D – No Action
		ACECs		
Proposed Bitter Creek ACEC	Long-term protection of visual quality by designating 71,000 acres as an ACEC.	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 68,834 acres as an ACEC, with OHV use closed or limited to designated routes.	Same as Alternative B.
Proposed Bitter Creek-P.R. Springs	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 78,591 acres as an ACEC, with OHV use closed or limited to designated routes.	
Proposed Coyote Basin-Snake John-Kennedy Wash ACEC	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 87,743 acres as an ACEC, with OHV use limited to designated routes.	Long-term protection of visual quality by designating 47,659 acres as an ACEC.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 124,161 acres as an ACEC, with OHV use closed or limited to designated routes.	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.
Proposed Four Mile Wash ACEC	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 50,280 acres as an ACEC, with OHV use limited to designated routes and closed to oil and gas leasing.	Same as Alternative A.
Proposed Middle Green River ACEC	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 6,768 acres as an ACEC, with OHV use limited to designated routes.	Same as Alternative A.

TABLE 4.17.2. IMPACTS OF SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS ON VISUAL RESOURCES [1]

Special Designation Areas	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D – No Action
Proposed Lower Green River ACEC	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 10,170 acres as an ACEC, manage as VRM II, and OHV limited to designated routes.	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 8,470 acres as an ACEC, managed as VRM II, limited or closed OHV use, and no surface-disturbing activities.
Proposed White River Corridor ACEC	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 17,810 acres as an ACEC, VRM I or II, with OHV use limited to designated routes.	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 47,130 acres as an ACEC, and closed or limited to designate routes for OHV.	Same as Alternative B.
Browns Park ACEC	Long-term protection of visual quality by maintaining 52,721 acres as an ACEC, as VRM I or II. The area would be closed to OHV use or limited to designated routes.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by maintaining 18,475 acres as an ACEC, but managed as VRM I through IV. OHV use would be closed or limited to designated routes.	Same as Alternative A.	Same acres designated as Alternative A, with protection of visual quality under VRM I through IV. OHV use would be open or limited to designated routes.
Proposed Nine Mile Canyon and Lears Canyon ACECs	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 48,000 acres (Nine Mile) and 1,375 acres (Lears) as ACECs, with OHV use closed or limited to designated routes.	Long-term protection of visual quality by designating 44,181 acres (Nine Mile) and 1,375 acres (Lears) as ACECs.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 81,168 acres (Nine Mile) and 1,375 acres (Lears) as ACECs for these two areas, with OHV use closed or limited to designated routes.	Same as Alternative B.
Red Mountain-Dry Fork ACEC	Long-term protection of visual quality by maintaining 24,285 acres as an ACEC, with OHV limited to designated routes.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by maintaining 24,285 acres as an ACEC, with OHV limited to designated routes, with OHV use open or limited to

TABLE 4.17.2. IMPACTS OF SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS ON VISUAL RESOURCES [1]

Special Designation Areas	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D – No Action
				designated routes.
Main Canyon ACEC	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the area as an ACEC.	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term beneficial visual quality impacts by designating 100,915 acres as an ACEC, with VRM I or II management, and closed to OHV travel or limited to designated routes.	Same as Alternative A.
Wild and Scenic				
White River segments	Long-term protection of visual quality by designating segments as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic.	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the river segments as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic.	Same as Alternative A, except that the protected segments are longer under this alternative (44 miles).	Same as Alternative B.
Middle Green River segment	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting the river segment as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic.	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term protection of visual quality by recommending designation of a segment of the Middle Green River as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic (approximately 36 miles).	Same as Alternative A.
Nine Mile Creek segments	Potential long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting segments as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic.	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term protection of visual quality by recommending designation of segments as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic (approximately 13 miles), as well as the segment within Duchesne County (approximately 6 miles) as suitable for	Same as Alternative A.

TABLE 4.17.2. IMPACTS OF SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREAS ON VISUAL RESOURCES [1]

Special Designation Areas	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D – No Action
			consideration as Wild and Scenic.	
Middle Green River segments	Potential long-term adverse impacts on visual quality by not designating segments as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic (approximately 23 miles).	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term protection of visual quality by recommending designation of a segment as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic (approximately 36 miles).	Same as Alternative A.
Evacuation Creek, Argyle Creek, and Bitter Creek segments	Potentially long-term adverse visual quality impacts by not protecting any of these creek segments as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic.	Same as Alternative A.	Long-term protection of visual quality by recommending designation of segments along these creeks as suitable for consideration as Wild and Scenic.	Same as Alternative A.

[1]As noted in section 4.17.2.9, VRM acreages used in this analysis of impacts on visual resources include all lands within the VPA, not only BLM administered lands. This is because the VRM analysis includes foreground, middleground, and background views that could encompass federal, state, and private property.

4.17.2.10 Impacts of Vegetation Decisions on Visual Resources

4.17.2.10.1 Alternatives A, B, and C

Alternatives A, B, and C would allow vegetation treatment via prescribed fire on 156,425 acres per decade (see also Section 4.17.2.2, Impacts of Fire Management Decisions on Visual Resources). The short-term and long-term, direct impacts of this vegetation treatment are described under Section 4.17.1, Impacts Common to All Alternatives.

4.17.2.10.2 Alternative D – No Action

Alternative D would allow vegetation treatment via prescribed fire on up to 27,950 acres in the Book Cliffs area and on 22,950 acres in the Diamond Mountain area. The impacts of vegetation treatment are described under Section 4.17.1, Impacts Common to All Alternatives. The impacts under the No Action Alternative would be similar to those for the action alternatives, but reduced in scale because of the fewer acres affected.

In summary, Alternatives A, B, and C would have the greatest short-term and long-term impacts to visual resources, and Alternative D would have the least impacts on visual resources due to vegetation management (that would include prescribed burning).

4.17.2.11 Effects of Visual Decisions on Visual Resources

The VRM acreages for each alternative are tabulated below in Table 4.17.3. As discussed above in Section 4.17.1, Impacts Common to All Alternatives, VRM Class I- and VRM Class II-designated areas would receive the highest level of visual resource protection, with direct, short-term and long-term, beneficial protection and preservation-related impacts on visual quality. The VRM Class III and VRM Class IV areas would receive less visual resource protection, which would allow more surface-disturbing impacts than VRM I and II.

TABLE 4.17.3. VRM CLASS ACREAGES BY ALTERNATIVE

	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
VRM I and II	513,644	286,801	768,890	286,457
VRM III and IV	1,960,356	2,187,198	1,705,110	2,187,543

In summary, based on these visual management designations, Alternative C would provide the highest degree of protection to scenic quality, followed by Alternative A. Alternatives B and D would provide the least protection to scenic quality.

4.17.2.12 Effects of Woodland and Forest Decisions on Visual Resources

4.17.2.12.1 Alternative A

Under Alternative A, management actions would maintain and restore woodlands and forest ecosystems to a condition in which biodiversity is preserved, insects and disease are controlled to normal levels, relict stands are maintained, fuel loading is reduced, historic fire regimes are restored, salvage is permitted, and multiple-use and sustained yield are allowed through fire treatments. Up to 552,663 acres would have fire treatments or be harvested.

The short-term, direct impacts of these actions on visual quality would be both adverse and beneficial: visual quality would be degraded by line, color, and texture contrasts created from woodland treatments, harvesting and salvage, and OHV surface disturbances in areas visible to the public, but beneficial visual quality impacts would result from the scenic variety created by the other management actions. Indirect, short-term and long-term, adverse, visual quality impacts would be produced by fences or barriers used to exclude livestock from the treated areas.

In the long-term, the woodland forest management actions would have beneficial impacts on visual resources by: 1) reducing the potential for catastrophic wildland fires that would adversely affect visual quality; and 2) improving visual quality through the creation of scenic variety found in the mosaic of vegetation types produced by vegetation treatments.

4.17.2.12.2 Alternative B

Alternative B would allow the harvesting and salvage of woodland and forest products to achieve the greatest output of woodland and forest products, after vegetation treatments designed to achieve desired future conditions. Up to 554,108 acres would have fire treatments or be harvested. This would have direct, short-term and long-term, adverse impacts on visual quality by creating distinct line, color, and texture contrasts from woodland treatments, harvesting and salvage, and OHV surface disturbances in areas visible to the public. Indirect, short-term, adverse impacts would also be created by soil erosion in the disturbed areas, which would further contribute to the visual contrasts already described.

4.17.2.12.3 Alternative C

Alternative C would have similar impacts as Alternative A, except that the impacts from forest and woodland species salvage would be allowed only when the woodland or forest resource were threatened, which would reduce the adverse impacts on visual resources.

4.17.2.12.4 Alternative D – No Action

Alternative D does not specify woodland and forest management actions, except that up to 88,200 acres of forest and 200,100 acres of woodlands would have treatments or be harvested.

In summary, woodland management under Alternative C would have the greatest beneficial impact on visual resources, followed by Alternative A. Alternative B have adverse impacts on visual quality by allowing public harvesting for maximum output of woodland and forest products. Alternative D would provide the least protection of visual quality because management actions are unspecified.

4.17.2.13 Summary of Impacts from Alternatives

4.17.2.13.1 Alternative A

Alternative A provides high scenic quality protection (though less than Alternative C) by:

- Establishing cultural resource protection areas
- Proposing the greatest acreages for protection as special designation areas (SRMAs, ACECs, and Wild and Scenic River suitability designation), except for Alternative C
- Providing the highest visual quality protection on steep slopes

- Establishing the highest number of VRM I and II acres for protection, except for Alternative C
- Allowing prescriptive fire treatments equal to Alternatives B and C

4.17.2.13.2 Alternative B

Alternative B provides less scenic quality protection than Alternatives A or C by:

- Allowing prescriptive fire treatments equal to Alternatives A and C
- Of the action alternatives, managing the most number of acres under VRM Class III and Class IV (the least protective VRM Classes)

4.17.2.13.3 Alternative C

Alternative C provides the highest level of protection for scenic quality by:

- Establishing the most protection for cultural resource areas
- Eliminating grazing in a segment of Nine Mile Canyon
- Allowing the least number of acres to be leased for mineral and hydrocarbon development (except for Alternative D)
- Proposing the greatest acreages for protection as special designation areas (SRMAs, ACECs, and Wild and Scenic River suitability designation)
- Establishing the highest acreage for management as VRM I and VRM II (the most protective VRM Classes)

4.17.2.13.4 Alternative D – No Action

This alternative provides the lowest level of protection for scenic quality by:

- Not establishing cultural site buffer zones
- Proposing the fewest acres and least scenic quality protection for recreation and special use areas (SRMAs, ACECs, and Wild and Scenic River suitability designation)
- Managing the highest acreage as VRM Class III and Class IV (the least protective VRM Classes), the same as Alternative B

4.17.3 Mitigation Measures

All surface-disturbing activities, regardless of alternative or management action, would be subject to the VRM Class objectives of the area within which the activity takes place. The visual resource contrast rating system is used as a guide to analyze the potential site-specific impacts of surface disturbance as well as facility design and placement. Surface-disturbing activities and facilities would then be designed to mitigate their visual impacts and conform to the area's assigned VRM Class objective. Mitigation would include camouflage coloring, facility design, placement, and/or topographic screening.

4.17.4 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Minerals exploration and development, trail construction, and woodland and vegetation treatments for fire management would cause short-term and long-term, unavoidable adverse

impacts on visual quality that cannot be completely mitigated by camouflage coloring, facility design, placement, and/or topographic screening.

4.17.5 Short-term Use Versus Long-term Productivity

The short-term construction of exploratory well pads and access roads would produce a long-term loss of scenic quality, particularly in areas where reclamation is problematic and/or unsuccessful. Similarly, short-term OHV trail use, such as woodcutting trails, seismic exploration, and unmanaged or unlimited recreational OHV use, would cause long-term losses in scenic quality if it occurs in highly visible or visually sensitive areas. The short-term adverse impacts of prescribed fire and other vegetation treatments would have long-term beneficial impacts on visual quality by improving the form, color, and line of vegetation, improving the vegetation mosaic, and reducing the potential for visual quality degradation from wildland fire.

4.17.6 Irreversible and Irretrievable Impacts

Some cultural resources, such as petroglyphs, pictographs, and prehistoric and historically important structures, are considered to have a visual resource component. Projects or activities that cause damage to or loss of these resources would have irreversible impacts on the resource. Irretrievable impacts to visual resources would result from: 1) surface disturbance caused by construction during the life of a project; and 2) fire management (until vegetation re-growth).

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